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Discussion on Cross-Cultural Collaboration for Vocational Teacher Education among US and Chinese Institutions

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Keywords: vocational education, adult education, cross-cultural collaboration

Abstract: This roundtable session is to discuss about the different characteristics of Chinese and US vocational education systems, the challenges of Chinese VET is facing, and the need and barriers for Chinese vocation teacher education collaborating with US institutions.

Vocational education and training is a key component of the entire educational systems in China. However, the VET system is viewed as a weak area in the current educational system, which attempts to become an effective and balanced system, especially after reforms of compulsory education and expansion of higher education in recent years (Yan, 2010). Chinese VET system has been experiencing challenges such as the trend of globalization (Salmi, 2000), employer's low expectation on vocation education (Liu, 2001), generally negative perceptions from the public (CICTE, 2009), and low quality of vocational teacher training (CICTE, 2009). Therefore, Chinese vocational colleges are seeking out opportunities to collaborate with US institutions.

This roundtable session will focus on a case of distance education program for vocational teachers in a Chinese vocational college in collaboration with US institution. The discussions with roundtable audience will be around topics on the teachers' needs and challenges for participating in this program, proposed blended learning curriculum design, online modules design and delivery, and learning outcomes evaluation criteria. This distance education plan will be collaborated with US institution. Blended learning is proposed given the distance and working schedule conflicts of the Chinese vocational teachers. The courses will be taught by faculty from the US institution. Considerations on transferring existing teacher education curriculum systems will be discussed. Due to the unique characteristics of Chinese education system, challenges have been identified for curriculum borrowing, including different curriculum design, different classroom behaviors, and different teaching and learning styles between US and Chinese adult education system. Cross-cultural adjustment in relation with curriculum design, teaching styles, language barriers, and course materials delivery formats and so on, are indicated. To arrive at a solution, an education plan for teacher education is proposed, which is a student-centered approach (vocational teachers as students) supported by government financial and policy-making efforts, academic literature search and research, teaching and learning improvement, and effective collaboration with US educational institutions. Feedback on this approach of education plan from roundtable participant is expected. Limitations and recommendations will also be discussed for next steps for this distance education plan with roundtable participants.

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